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Roduit J.A.R. Review of Harris, J.: 2016, *How to be Good: The Possibility of Moral Enhancement*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 224 pages, hardcover, ISBN: 9780198707592, price: 40 USD.

John Harris' newest book examines the ethics of moral enhancement. Harris demonstrates how humans can attempt to be morally good, and what means should they use to improve their morality. The book focuses on whether new biotechnological interventions on our brain could be used as a means to moral enhancement. Put it simply, could we just take a pill to become morally better? For Harris, this raises important questions regarding the role our "freedom to fall" plays in our understanding of morality, and whether these sort of moral bioenhancements are truly enhancements or only a threat to human freedom. Harris suggests the later. For him, moral bioenhancements do not allow us to remain "masters of our fate, entities which create ourselves by decisions and actions".

Harris argues that one cannot be good by using some sort of moral bio-enhancement, as suggested by Tom Douglas, Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson. Harris' main argument is that "the methods of moral enhancement, considered by these and other contemporary advocates of a specific agenda of moral enhancement, not only may pose dangers to our freedom both of thought and deed, but will ultimately fail". For Harris, it is better to morally enhance through "the powerful armoury of ways we already have of learning, developing, improving, and deploying our public and private morality." (8). In short, moral enhancement needs to be done through cognitive enhancement, because in order to be moral, one needs to be rational.

The first three chapters look at the nature of morality, why morality matters, and how morality is not limited to human beings, but will also be important for a being that might come after *Homo sapiens*. The following chapters deal with issues of freedom and moral enhancement (Chapter 4 and 5). Chapter 6 and 7 challenge the views of Savulescu and Persson regarding the possibilities of moral enhancement. For Harris, Savulescu and Persson are wrong: moral bioenhancement is not a good way to enhance our morality, because it would remove our freedom to fall. Without this freedom, it is impossible to be moral. Harris writes, "Without the freedom to fall, good cannot be a choice and freedom disappears and along with it virtue. There is no virtue in doing what you must". Chapter 8 and 9 look at the connection between the brain and morality, and defend that moral bioenhancement would undermine what is needed for moral progress, namely freedom. Chapter 10–11 looks at the risks moral bioenhancement can bring. Finally, Chapter 12 looks at the possibility that future beings or species might be mechanical rather than organic, and whether this will affect morality.

Surprisingly, we find Harris in the camp of bioconservatives. This shows that one can be against some specific enhancements in a particular context, while in favor of

other type of enhancements in another one. One could be for military enhancement, while against cognitive enhancement in academia. This also indicates that terms or labels like *bioconservatives*, *bioliberals*, *transhumanists*, *etc.* might not always be useful. One might always be categorized bioconservatives or bioliberals, when compared with someone with more radical views.

Besides the above remark, this review addresses three points. *First*, Harris's view differs from his critique only regarding the *means* that would be used for moral bioenhancement. Harris is not against enhancing ourselves to become more moral. To the contrary, he not only defends cognitive enhancement as a way to become more moral, but also reiterates his hope that traditional education can do the job better than what new technologies promise.

Second, Harris' argument that we would lose our freedom to fall if we were to use some sort of moral bioenhancement is not convincing. With education we also lose our freedom to fall. For instance, I do not feel and think that I have the freedom to do certain act (such as kill an innocent life) and I am glad not to have this freedom to fall. To the contrary, I have the freedom not to kill an innocent person. Here, Harris' argument echoes the theological discussion regarding whether one is free to sin vs. free not to sin. Or, putting it otherwise, whether one is enslaved to sin or enslaved to righteousness. In the same way, while Harris claims he will lose his freedom to fall, he might actually gain more freedom through moral enhancement, and become free not to fall. It also seems rather strange that one would keep defending the idea that to be free to do immoral acts is good in itself.

Third, I am skeptical about the enthusiasm Harris shares in his last chapter regarding the possibility of creating a creature that would surpass *H. sapiens*. Some creatures might surpass us regarding some functions or properties. Some already do. Some animals live longer or run faster than humans. However, animals do not seem to be morally better than humans. How could we even know what will come after *H. sapiens*, let alone whether or not they will be morally better? Harris assumes that it will be the case and speaks against the prejudice some supposedly have against machine life, in favor of organic life. But similarly, one might have prejudice against our organic life in favor of an artificial life.

Overall, the book is a helpful addition to the debate regarding the possibility of moral bioenhancement. It asks a really interesting question regarding whether moral bioenhancement would be a threat to our freedom to fall. While Harris' answer is not entirely satisfying, it has the merit of challenging some of the hype around the possibility of moral bioenhancement.